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ABSTRACT

This booklet summarizes the findings of the task force which met for two 2-day meetings in January and March 1970 to review ongoing programs concerned with paraprofessionals, hearing from several National Education Association (NEA) units and from paraprofessionals themselves. The report contains 1) a brief examination of the history and present status of paraprofessional school personnel; 2) discussion of definition, roles and functions, and needs of paraprofessionals; and 3) recommendations of the task force to NEA. The definition set forth is this: "'Paraprofessional' denotes that segment of auxiliary personnel working directly with professional educators to assist them in discharging their professional duties" (includes teacher aides, lay readers, and instructional aides). The needs of the group are stated to include identification of roles and responsibilities in relation to the professional educator, preservice and inservice training programs for all personnel involved in paraprofessional programs, and establishment of an organizational structure related to the united teaching profession to meet their economic and organizational needs. Recommendations focus on expansion of the NEA/ACT auxiliary personnel program to give it the status of division or section within NEA. Included is request for allocation of funds for several specific purposes. Also listed are guidelines designed to assist local, state, and national associations in efforts to organize paraprofessionals. (JS)

REPORT OF THE NEA TASK FORCE ON PARAPROFESSIONALS

Prepared for presentation to
the 1970 Representative Assembly
of the National Education Association

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THE CHARGE

> The National Education Association recognizes that the relationships between paraprofessionals and the organized profession, including category of membership, need clarification. The Association calls upon its state and local affiliates to join with it in a task force to define the needs and functions of paraprofessionals and to recommend guidelines to establish their appropriate relation to local, state, and national associations. Recommendations of the task force should be presented to the 1970 Representative Assembly.

So charged by the 1969 NEA Representative Assembly in NEA Resolution 69-5, the Task Force on Paraprofessionals, appointed by NEA President George D. Fischer, began its work in January 1970. The Task Force was confronted with the problems of a class of educational personnel that has evolved somewhat haphazardly.

THE HISTORY AND PRESENT STATUS OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

New developments in educational concepts and technology have created more complex roles for teachers and a need for paraprofessionals in the classroom.

The first major experiment in the use of paraprofessional personnel in American education was undertaken in 1953 in Bay City, Michigan, with a grant from the Ford Foundation. As stated by the sponsoring groups, the object of this and subsequent similar experiments in Connecticut and New Jersey was to free teachers to teach and at the same time to preserve quality education in the face of rising educational costs and a shortage of professional educators. The teaching profession, on the whole, rejected the program because of the apparent diversion of educational funds to employ untrained personnel at the expense of certificated teachers and also at the expense of the quality of educational opportunities for students.

In the mid-1960's, as a result of the availability of federal funds on a greater scale, the use of paraprofessional personnel in schools increased sharply. The focus of many of these new programs was the right of all persons to essential human services. It was found that the communication gap between middle-class professional educators and students of a different socioeconomic class could sometimes be effectively bridged by the paraprofessional. In many instances, the use of paraprofessionals from urban areas with the children in these areas proved effective and valuable.

Fortunately, an essential component of these new programs which had been missing in the program of the 1950's was a more systematic approach to the use of paraprofessionals, including role definition, development training, and institutionalization of paraprofessionals as a stable and integral part of the educational environment.

An indication of the recent increase in the use of paraprofessionals appears in *Research Memo 1969-11,* published by the NEA Research Division, which reported 40,295 teacher aides working in 799 school systems with enrollments of 6,000 or more in the 1968-69 school year, compared with 29,939 in 743 such systems the previous year.

A current estimate (in *Urban Review,* October 1969) is that more than 200,000 teacher aides are working directly with classroom teachers or other professional personnel in the schools. The National Congress of Parents and Teachers estimates that schools will be using more than a million paraprofessionals by 1976.

With the increase in numbers of paraprofessionals have come (a) a sounder educational basis for their utilization, (b) greater acceptance of paraprofessionals by professional educators, and (c) a more concerted effort to develop the role of the paraprofessional to its full potential.

Evidence of increased acceptance of paraprofessionals during the last decade is shown in the profession's repeated statements calling for the greater use of paraprofessional personnel in the schools and the establishment of guidelines for developing paraprofessional programs. The following resolutions of the National Education Association and of the Association of Classroom Teachers illustrate this point in part.

> **NEA Resolution C8:** The National Education Association urges local school systems to provide classroom teachers with a supportive staff who will free the teacher from certain nonteaching and routine duties so that he can perform more successfully the primary task of teaching each child. The Association also urges its local affiliates and local school systems to become involved in the recruitment, orientation, and training of paraprofessionals and auxiliary personnel. . . .
>
> **ACT Resolution 69-27:** ACT urges local school systems to provide classroom teachers with a supportive staff who will free the teachers from nonteaching duties so that they can perform successfully their primary task, teaching.
>
> ACT supports the employment of auxiliary personnel in the public schools for nonteaching duties when specific money appropriations are made for this purpose but not at the expense of existing educational programs. It urges local associations (a) to become involved in the development of personnel policies for their employment and guidelines for their roles and responsibilities in the classroom and (b) to participate in their recruitment, orientation, training, and evaluation. It urges state associations to promote action necessary to ensure full legal and liability protection for such auxiliary personnel.
>
> ACT urges that the NEA continue (a) to improve the criteria for proper use of auxiliary personnel, (b) to build a program of service, including fringe benefits, to meet their needs, and (c) to establish an organization for auxiliary personnel with a separate membership classification in ACT.

The increased need for concerted action by the professional associations is evidenced by the fact that, despite the tremendous growth in the use of paraprofessionals, program planning is still haphazard and moving forward far too slowly. The bylaws of many local and state associations and of the NEA provide associate membership categories, but the privileges, services, and programs of such categories are not designed to meet the specific needs, interests, or financial resources of paraprofessionals. Groups outside the united teaching profession have made efforts to organize auxiliary personnel. However, since the relationship between teachers and auxiliary personnel must be harmonious and unified in purpose, it would appear that the united teaching profession must take the initiative in establishing a more appropriate relationship and in providing more adequate services.

Perhaps the best evidences of the united teaching profession's readiness to accept its responsibility are the financing of the auxiliary personnel unit under the administration of ACT beginning in 1967 and the appointment of the Task Force on Paraprofessionals.

THE WORK OF THE TASK FORCE ON PARAPROFESSIONALS

The Task Force on Paraprofessionals met January 29-30 and March 16-17, 1970. A subcommittee of the Task Force met subsequently.

The first order of business was to assess the current situation and to review ongoing programs concerned with paraprofessionals and other auxiliary personnel. During the meetings, the Task Force heard from representatives of several NEA units who had been invited to give presentations regarding auxiliary personnel and from paraprofessionals themselves who discussed their primary concerns.

The Task Force then outlined issues to be considered, which fall into three major categories: definition, roles and functions, and needs of paraprofessionals.

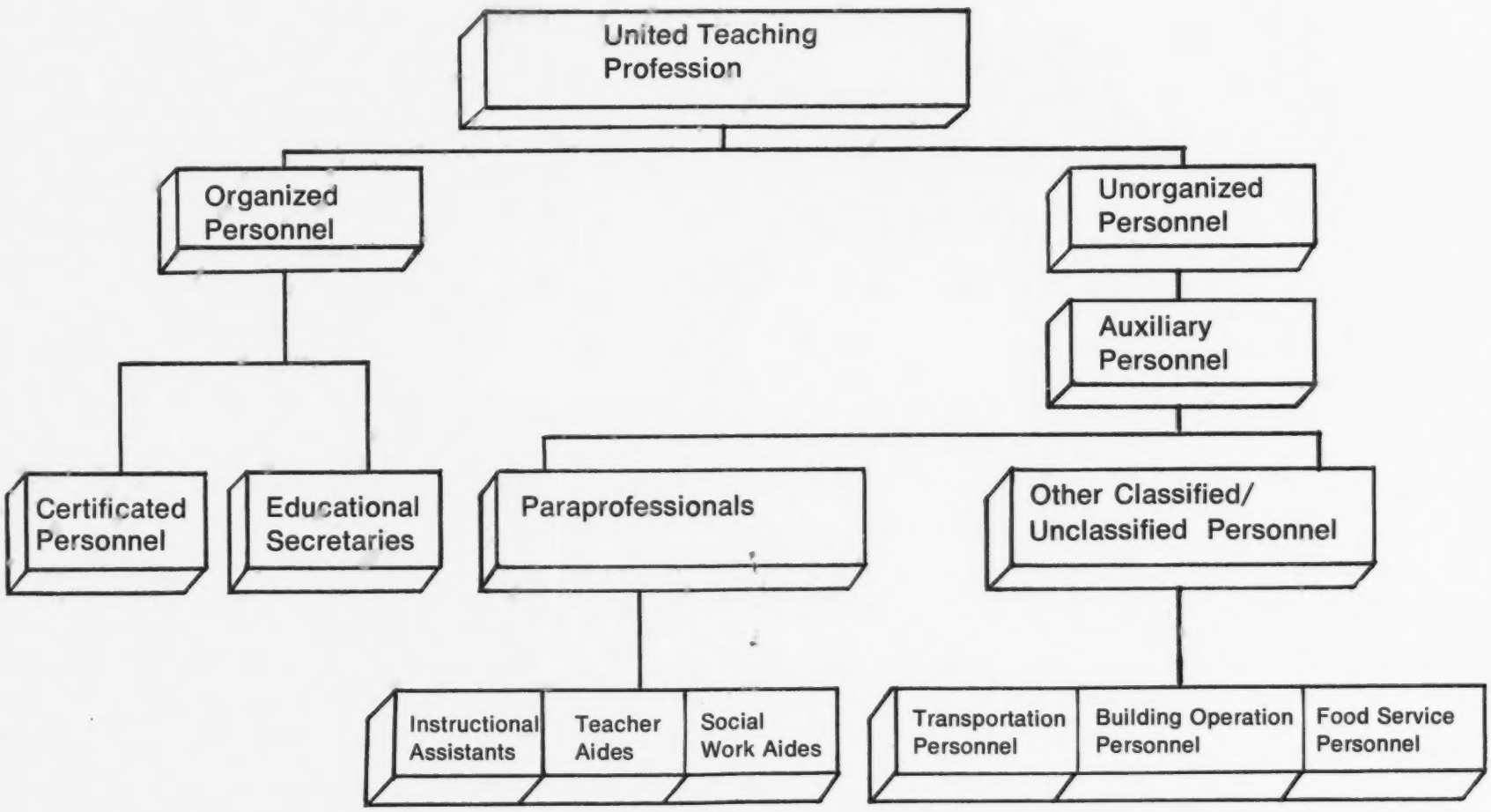
Definition

Such terms as *paraprofessional, auxiliary personnel,* and *teacher aide* have long been used interchangeably. The Task Force made the following distinctions in the terminology:

> *Auxiliary personnel* denotes all persons supportive to the educational process who do not need to have a professional background to assume their responsibilities, although there may be varying degrees of training, skills, or academic preparation.
>
> *Paraprofessional* denotes that segment of auxiliary personnel working directly with professional educators to assist them in discharging their professional duties. *Teacher aides, lay readers, instructional aides,* and similar categories are included within the classification of paraprofessionals.
>
> In contrast, other types of auxiliary personnel work indirectly to assist in the educational process. *Transportation personnel, building operation personnel, food service personnel,* and similar categories are examples of other auxiliary personnel. (See diagram.)

Roles and Functions

Identifying and developing the roles and functions of paraprofessionals must be a balanced effort to prevent either their underuse by professional teachers not properly oriented to the new staffing pattern or their overuse by administrators and boards of education faced with financial pressures.



Initially the duties and responsibilities of paraprofessionals were envisioned as merely housekeeping and clerical assignments. Later the scope of the duties was expanded to include a number of responsibilities related to instruction. One source (Croft Leadership Action Folio No. 7) divides the tasks of paraprofessionals into five major categories: (a) clerical (collecting money, keeping records, typing, filing, etc.); (b) housekeeping (keeping instructional material neat and ready for use, arranging work areas, supervising pupil cleanup activities, etc.); (c) noninstructional (making arrangements for field trips or resource persons, monitoring, checking out library books, etc.); (d) audiovisual (ordering audiovisual materials, setting up equipment, etc.); and (e) instruction-related (correcting tests and homework, preparing instructional materials, working with small groups, tutoring individuals, etc.).

While most school systems have placed the majority of paraprofessional responsibilities under the one classification of teacher aide, some have become more specific and have established different categories on the basis of differing responsibilities and requirements in qualifications and training. Some of these categories are teacher aide, instructional assistant, clerical aide, social work aide, community aide, counselor aide, administrative assistant aide, audiovisual technician, library aide, lay reader, and supervisory aide (e.g., for bus, lunchroom, or playground).

The minimum entrance requirements for these specific categories vary from less than a third-grade education to three years of college training. The qualifications of a paraprofessional thus depend upon the specific needs of the program and the duties and responsibilities to be assigned.

Federally funded programs such as New Careers, Follow Through, and Career Opportunity Program are helping to make the position of the paraprofessional important and challenging. In fact, a sense of "new professionalism" is being born. The "lattice concept" of New Careers, built into such programs as that in Minneapolis, provides an opportunity for the paraprofessional to move vertically as well as horizontally. Experience, academic endeavors, and supplementary training are recognized by advancement in the program.

The new dimension of instruction-related activities does not change the classroom teacher's professional responsibility for diagnosing, prescribing, and evaluating;

in fact, it enhances this responsibility. The additional support to the teacher should, in effect, make it possible for the teacher to place more emphasis on creativity, self-direction, motivation, individualized instruction, and innovations in education.

The paraprofessional not only can assist the teacher with activities directly related to the classroom, but also can provide a valuable link between the school and the community. Therefore, the responsibilities of paraprofessionals can—and, in fact, do—provide for a more meaningful and realistic experience for the learner at the same time that they offer support to the professional educator.

Needs of Paraprofessionals

The Task Force considered the needs of paraprofessionals as presented by educators concerned with the development of paraprofessional programs as well as by representatives of the paraprofessionals themselves. It became apparent that paraprofessionals and other auxiliary personnel working in schools today are in need of a viable program and type of organization that provides for total participation and involvement in the united teaching profession at local, state, and national levels.

Although paraprofessionals and other auxiliary personnel have needs unique to their assignments, some are shared by the classroom teachers and other professional educators. These shared needs include—

1. Identification of the roles and responsibilities of auxiliary personnel in relation to the professional educator.
2. Training programs—preservice and in-service—for all personnel involved in paraprofessional programs, including teachers, administrators, supervisors, and paraprofessionals.
3. Establishment of an organizational structure related to the united teaching profession which will meet the unique organizational and economic needs of auxiliary personnel.

It is imperative that all organizations and programs for paraprofessionals and other auxiliary personnel, including the now-functioning NEA/ACT auxiliary personnel program, be relevant to and supportive of the special concerns and interests of auxiliary personnel. Such programs should work to meet the following needs:

1. Training programs
2. Institutionalization, which is closely allied to the need for training
3. Research and development related to new staffing patterns
4. An information exchange center
5. An organization for auxiliary personnel
6. Organizational structure and program development assistance
7. Other needs identified by paraprofessionals.

Training programs These should involve paraprofessionals as well as teachers working with them, to ensure the development of the attitudes and skills essential for deriving the maximum benefit from the use of paraprofessionals.

Training programs should consist of two interrelated phases, preservice and in-service. The preservice phase should be planned cooperatively by boards of education, institutions of higher learning, community representatives, professional staff, local education associations, and participants, so that professionals and paraprofessionals may develop understanding of and respect for the roles played by each as part of a team whose goal is the improvement of the educational environment. The in-service phase should be a continuation of preservice efforts, emphasizing the development of mechanisms for process observations and feedback to enhance the roles of professional educators and paraprofessionals and the relationships between them.

As such training programs involve the professional classroom teacher, they must be designed (a) to redefine the traditional self-contained classroom and to help the teacher adjust to the new roles of diagnostician, prescriber, and supervisor of a supportive staff; (b) to teach managerial skills, such as scheduling, sharing responsibilities, using time, space, and resources effectively, expanding the range of activities, upgrading teaching methods and concepts, and evaluating the work of paraprofessionals; and (c) to develop human relations skills which will enable the teacher to work successfully with a supportive staff, to share responsibilities and pupil affection, to establish rapport with paraprofessionals, to communicate and interpret tasks to be performed by the paraprofessionals, and to accept a new role with a sense of security.

Institutionalization. There should be created a formal structure through which paraprofessionals are trained, licensed, recruited, classified, evaluated, and provided with opportunities for advancement. In essence, such a structure would help fulfill the growing desire of paraprofessionals for a "new professionalism."

Institutionalization can involve the cooperation of junior and community colleges in the development of programs for auxiliary personnel, making possible movement into roles requiring more knowledge and skills than the entry level. Senior colleges serve a twofold purpose in such an approach, providing educational opportunities for auxiliary personnel who may wish to advance to the professional level, and incorporating into their curriculums the expanded role concept of the teacher as one able to organize human and material resources in meeting the needs of children.

Institutionalization of paraprofessionals should also involve the incorporation of the paraprofessional program as an integral part of the school system, rather than treatment as an extraneous and temporary addition. Goals, cooperative planning, opportunity for advancement through training available at each stage on a work-study basis, licensing requirements and statutes, and evaluation by an advisory committee would round out the total program.

Research and development. All persons involved in any phase of paraprofessional programs must be kept aware of various resources available from the federal government, new developments in organization, and state and local legislative actions regarding certification and licensing, working conditions, contracts, changing roles and responsibilities, publications, audiovisual materials, training programs, and educational trends relevant to auxiliary personnel.

An information exchange center. Educators and auxiliary personnel should be kept up to date through the dissemination of materials on a regular basis by an information exchange center.

Programs may vary within a given locale and on a nationwide scale. The information gathered through research and development, along with any other information about new materials, guidelines, contracts, and periodicals, should be made available to educators and auxiliary personnel to facilitate nationwide communication among the various programs in operation.

An organization for auxiliary personnel. An organization for auxiliary personnel should be designed to meet their specific needs and should be integrated into the united teaching profession at local, state, and national levels.

This is perhaps the most urgent need, for such an organization would provide auxiliary personnel with both a central apparatus working to fulfill all their other needs as school personnel and an outlet through which they could voice their concerns as members of the education team. The united teaching profession must be responsive to this need. Conditions of employment and the economic status of auxiliary personnel have a direct and intimate bearing on the classroom teacher. The educational program and the interests of teachers, auxiliary personnel, and children will be served best if there is a cooperative organizational effort. Educators must take steps immediately to establish, in cooperation with the auxiliary personnel, standards for their qualifications, certification, duties, and use, as well as to adjust the current organizational structure to provide affiliate categories such as units, departments, or councils within the local, state, and national associations and separate membership classifications for paraprofessionals and other auxiliary personnel where necessary. (See pp. 16-17.)

Organizational structure and program development assistance. Help in organization and program development should be available from NEA to local and state education associations, auxiliary personnel organizations, and those auxiliary personnel interested in organizing. Financial assistance, leadership training workshops, consultant services, and other assistance would be of extreme importance and would offer the necessary support to these groups.

Other needs. Other needs identified by paraprofessionals may include full-time auxiliary personnel directors in local, state, and national associations; negotiation assistance and representation; legal services; newsletters; special services (e.g., car leasing, low-cost insurance, and investment opportunities); retirement benefits; and guidelines on rights and responsibilities.

Pursuant to the needs discussed above and to the recommendations listed in the following section, the Task Force on Paraprofessionals presented a budget proposal to the NEA Budget Committee to increase the resources

of the NEA/ACT auxiliary personnel program. The budget presented would provide for such items as an increase in staff of one professional and 1½ secretaries, office expenses, printing, travel, an advisory council, state pilot programs, special projects such as a slide and filmstrip series, an information exchange center, and two training institutes.

As requested, the budget would put into operation a strong, well conceived total program encompassing efforts at local, state, and national levels and would assure the united teaching profession of a leadership position in this vital area.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE ON PARAPROFESSIONALS

In view of the current status of paraprofessionals in education and of the needs of paraprofessionals as described in the foregoing section, the Task Force on Paraprofessionals makes the following recommendations:

1. That the NEA/ACT auxiliary personnel program be expanded, that as soon as feasible it be given the status of a division or section within the organizational structure, and that sufficient funds be allocated immediately for the following purposes:

   a. To develop a center for the collection and dissemination of information relating to auxiliary personnel and their use, organization, and development.

   b. To design a training program for both auxiliary personnel and teachers working with auxiliary personnel. Local and state affiliates, as well as local school systems, colleges, and universities should be involved in developing this design.

   c. To provide encouragement, assistance, and financial aid on a matching basis to local and state associations in their efforts to develop membership categories and/or an organizational structure and service programs for auxiliary personnel.

   d. To establish an advisory council on auxiliary personnel to coordinate activities within NEA units and to communicate with the NEA members. One member of the NEA Board of Directors should be appointed as the official Association liaison.

e. To develop slide and filmstrip series to demonstrate effective utilization of auxiliary personnel and to promote NEA membership among auxiliary personnel.

2. That until such time as a separate structure is provided within NEA for affiliation of an association of auxiliary personnel, their relationship with NEA be through the respective local NEA affiliates.

3. That auxiliary personnel representing local and state associations of auxiliary personnel be involved in NEA activities where appropriate.

4. That Student NEA be involved in programs for training auxiliary personnel.

5. That local, state, and national associations use the following guidelines in assisting auxiliary personnel in their organization efforts:

Local Education Associations

• Appoint an ad hoc committee to survey the current status of auxiliary personnel in the local school systems and to explore the feasibility of establishing an organization for auxiliary personnel.

• Involve a group of auxiliary personnel in the early stages of exploration and planning.

• Request assistance from the state education association and NEA auxiliary personnel unit.

• Develop, with the assistance of the auxiliary personnel on the planning committee, a program, an organizational structure, and a procedure for implementation.

• Amend the association bylaws as necessary to provide for a special individual membership and/or affiliate organization of auxiliary personnel.

State Education Associations

• Appoint an ad hoc committee to survey the current status of auxiliary personnel on a statewide basis, and explore the feasibility of creating auxiliary personnel organizations at local and state levels.

• Involve auxiliary personnel in all stages of planning.

• Request assistance from the NEA auxiliary personnel unit.

• Assist local education associations in organizing groups of auxiliary personnel.

• Assist local auxiliary personnel organizations in organizing on a statewide basis.

• Amend the state association bylaws to provide for a special individual membership and/or affiliate organization of auxiliary personnel, and create a vehicle through which a successful working relationship can be established between the state education association and the state auxiliary personnel organization.

• Initiate action for the passage of state statutes regarding licensing, permits, or certification for auxiliary personnel.

National Education Association

• Continue to assist state and local associations in serving auxiliary personnel.

• Expand the NEA research data available on auxiliary personnel.

• Amend the NEA Bylaws to provide for an auxiliary personnel category.*

• Amend the report of the Task Force on Local Association Structure (adopted by the Board of Directors October 11, 1968) to provide for auxiliary personnel in either separate organization structures or separate caucuses within an all-inclusive association.

• Establish an advisory council to act until the nature of the auxiliary personnel organization at the national level is determined.

• Designate a member of the NEA Board of Directors to serve as liaison between the advisory council and the NEA Board.

• Involve representatives of local and state organizations of auxiliary personnel in NEA activities where appropriate.

• Encourage state education associations to initiate efforts to secure the passage of desirable state statutes for licensing of auxiliary personnel.

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* A proposed amendment to the Bylaws appears on page 18.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE NEA BYLAWS

Article I—Membership

Auxiliary Personnel

* Section 8. Persons not otherwise identified in these Bylaws who are employed in school systems and who directly or indirectly assist the professional personnel to provide improved educational opportunities may become members. Unified membership shall be required where NEA affiliate organizations of auxiliary personnel have been established on local and state levels.

Such members shall receive all rights and privileges of the Association, except those of holding office in the Association and representation in the Representative Assembly. They may hold meetings of their own group in conjunction with the Representative Assembly or at a time of their choice.

Annual dues shall be $10.

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* Subsequent sections should be renumbered.